

# 2021 Legislative Session Overview





# BROADEN ECONOMIC SUCCESS

Utah enjoys a strong and diverse economy. From our breath-taking landscapes, skilled and industrious workforce, and business-friendly policies, it is no wonder businesses love calling Utah home. Because the root of this success is free-market principles, to maintain our economic vitality, our policies must cultivate an environment where the free market can flourish. This session, we passed legislation to boost Utah's economy and continue on a path of prosperity and success.

## Tax Relief

We passed historic legislation that will provide approximately \$100 million in tax relief to Utah citizens. Though Utah's economy is in an advantageous position compared to other states, many are struggling. Three bills, H.B. 86, S.B. 11, and S.B. 153 will aid families, veterans and elderly citizens and will further boost Utah's economic success.



**H.B. 86 Social Security Tax Amendments** (Rep. Brooks) eliminates income tax on some social security income, benefitting many Utah seniors living on a fixed income.

**S.B. 11 Retirement Income Tax Amendments** (Sen. Harper, Rep. Pierucci) benefits individuals who served in the armed forces by eliminating individual income tax on military retirement pay.

**S.B. 153 Utah Personal Exemption Amendments** (Sen. Fillmore, Rep. J. Moss) restores part of the dependent tax exemption, which was eliminated in the 2017 federal tax reform, increasing taxes for many Utah families. In 2018, the Utah Legislature brought back a portion of the exemption and restored even more of the exemption this session, to further reduce taxes for families.

## Economic Development Incentives

This session, the Legislature focused on creating policies to allow the state to continue to enjoy incredible economic growth.

**H.B. 384 Economic Development Amendments** (Rep. Hawkes) reimagines Utah's economic development incentives to support local businesses, help Utah entrepreneurs, bring regional and national headquarters to Utah, and encourage job creation in rural parts of the state.

**H.B. 356 Rural Economic Development Tax Increment Financing** (Rep. Albrecht) provides tax incentives for new business projects located in rural areas of the state.

## Reduce Regulatory Burdens

After soliciting input from the business community, the Legislature crafted policies to allow the private market to flourish while ensuring necessary protections for consumers, communities, and the environment.

**H.B. 217 Regulatory Sandbox Program Amendments** (Rep. Maloy) establishes a regulatory sandbox to allow innovative companies to operate in a controlled environment without having to comply with the regulatory framework that never imagined the innovations in play.

## Generational Opportunities

Utah's economic future has the potential to become the "Crossroads of the World." This session, we worked to take full advantage of our vast economic development opportunities. The Point of the Mountain area connects our two most populated counties and the opportunities it presents are astounding. The Inland Port's connecting hub and spokes across the state will bring unrivaled distribution capability and allow Utah to emerge as a significant international trade partner.

**H.B. 52 Point of the Mountain Development Commission** (Rep. Snow) revises the role of the Point of the Mountain Development Commission and extends the repeal date. The Commission will study and develop strategies to engage the public and collaborate with stakeholders including local governments, the Wasatch Front Regional Council, the Mountainland Association of Governments, the Utah Department of Transportation, and the Utah Transit Authority.

**S.B. 243 Political Subdivision Amendments** (Sen. Stevenson, Rep. Gibson) sets up an infrastructure bank framework for the Inland Port, Point of the Mountain, and Military Installation Development Authority.





# BUILD A CONNECTED FUTURE

Utah is growing at an unprecedented rate. Critical infrastructure is the foundation for our economy and quality of life. The Legislature took steps this session to protect our infrastructure and and invest in the future.

## Infrastructure Investment

**H.B. 433 Amendments Related to Infrastructure Funding** (Rep. Schultz) is the largest infrastructure funding package in Utah history, authorizing about \$1.1 billion in transportation infrastructure investment including over \$300 million in transit. The bill will fund infrastructure projects in every corner and region of the state including double-tracking sections of the FrontRunner, a rail bridge project in Brigham City, bus rapid transit in the Salt Lake mid-valley area, environmental study at Point of the Mountain, expansion of trails and active transportation, and road improvements across the state.

## Recreation

Outdoor recreation is key to our quality of life. Visitors from around the globe flock to Utah to experience the natural beauty found in our state. Crowds have grown so large that our parks and the nearby towns are struggling to keep up.

New investment of \$146 million in Utah's recreation will add more than 500 campsites to our overall inventory and expand day-use parking by 10% which is about 1000 visitor parking spaces. Additionally, \$37 million will go towards two new state parks. When completed, these investments will mean thousands more Utahns will be able to enjoy our state parks.





**H.B. 257 Utah State Park Amendments** (Rep. Eliason) creates the Utahraptor State Park located near Moab and Lost Creek State Park in the mountains of Northern Utah.

**H.C.R. 13 Concurrent Resolution Regarding the Bridal Veil Falls Area** (Rep. Stratton) encourages the Division of Parks and Recreation to evaluate options for designating the Bridal Veil Falls area as a state monument or state park.

## Water

Water is a perennial challenge for our state and for every state in the West. We took proactive steps to confront the issues we face.

**H.B. 297 Colorado River Amendments** (Speaker Wilson) establishes a framework to better engage in a dialogue with our neighboring states and work productively toward a solution. The time has come to get serious about water and a significant element of that relates to the century-old Colorado Compact.

## Technology

**H.B. 243 Privacy Protection Amendments** (Rep. Gibson) protects our personal data. As technology becomes better and predictive behavior software is created our privacy is more at risk than ever before. This bill will allow for audits on certain state agencies to ensure practices are in place to protect our personal identifiable information.



# EXTEND OPPORTUNITY TO ALL

Many in our state do not have access to resources that others take for granted and that provide the foundation for individual opportunity. As a Legislature, we strived to broaden access to key resources in health, education, and housing to expand opportunity for all Utahns.

## Health

Beyond the pandemic, the physical and mental health of Utah's citizens is a fundamental concern of the Legislature and is also key to our state's prosperity. Recognizing that the previous year has brought significant strain on our health system, the Legislature is dedicated to keeping Utahns healthy and able to live full lives.

**H.B. 288 Education and Mental Health Coordinating Council** (Rep. V. Peterson) This bill creates a council, made up of educators, mental and behavioral health experts, and other advocates. It will provide action-oriented guidance to state leaders on how to meet the behavioral and mental health needs of kids and families in our state.

**H.B. 377 Child Mental Health Amendments** (Rep. Eliason) requires the Office of Child Care to collaborate with the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to deliver early childhood programs and child care throughout the state.

**H.B. 262 Children's Health Insurance Amendments** (Rep. Welton) Utah has one of the highest rates of uninsured children. This bill will help connect families of uninsured children with existing coverage options that best suit their needs. Once implemented this bill could impact 82,000 children in the state who are without coverage.

**H.B. 81 Mental Health Days for Students** (Rep. Winder) adds mental or behavioral health as a valid excuse for a school absence. This not only helps vulnerable youth who are at a breaking point, but it also sends a message to our young populations that their physical and mental health matters.





# Education

The Legislature prioritizes investment in education that truly prepares our students to compete in a global marketplace, fulfill a meaningful role in our society, and achieve their potential. Ensuring such an education is a possibility to any child in the state, regardless of the economic status of their neighborhood or family, is a necessity if we are to provide equitable opportunities to all Utahns. The Legislature increased education funding by \$500 million, a 10% increase.

## **H.B. 381 Grow Your Own Teacher and School Counselor Pipeline Program** (Rep. J. Moss)

Creates a grant program, that provides funding for paraprofessionals, school counselor assistants, and school counselor interns within the state to incentivize individuals to continue their training to become licensed teachers or licensed school counselors.

## **H.B. 328 Adult Learners Grant Program** (Rep. Snow) creates the Adult Learners Grant Program to provide financial assistance to adult students pursuing online education.

We also provided an appropriation for the College Access Advisors program, which helps high school students navigate their post-graduation options. Providing opportunities for education is one of the most important things we can do for Utah students, our workforce and the state's future.

This session the Legislature funded public education enrollment growth and inflation. We also restored a 6% increase in per-student funding, set aside \$121 million for public school teacher bonuses, and set aside \$127 million to ensure we can keep our promises to education in the future. All said, we will provided nearly half a billion dollars on additional money to public education. Our investments did not end in K-12 schools – we also provided a more than 9% increase for higher education – in addition to nearly \$200 million in new cash-funded building and land purchases.



# Housing

Adequate, safe, and stable housing is a key element in an individual's path toward a better life. Average home prices have risen almost twice as much as the median income in the state, making it increasingly difficult for many in our state to afford a house.

While it is not the role of government alone to address housing affordability challenges, we can increase housing availability and relieve pressure on prices by decreasing regulations.



**H.B. 82 Single-family Housing Modifications** (Rep. Ward) prohibits municipalities from restricting accessory dwelling units. Accessory dwelling units are commonly referred to as: in-law apartments, over-garage apartments or other similar spaces. By decreasing regulatory burdens, we can help our younger and more vulnerable populations afford to call Utah home.

**H.B. 98 Local Government Building Regulation Amendments** (Rep. Ray) balances the regulations that local governments place on home builders and modifies requirements for a building permit application.

**H.B. 347 Homeless Services Amendments** (Rep. Eliason) creates the state homelessness coordinator within the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget who is appointed by the governor and serves as an advisor to the governor on homelessness issues.

This session, legislative leaders and philanthropic representatives agreed to a public-private partnership to address affordable housing and homelessness. To address these challenges, the Utah Legislature will use \$50 million in state funds and through the support of the philanthropic community, amplify that investment to almost three-quarters of a billion dollars in impact.



# BALANCE EMERGENCY POWERS

2020 was a year unlike any before. As we address new and unforeseen challenges, we must ensure that our actions are rooted in the constitutional principle that divides the powers of government among three branches, each with distinct functions and responsibilities.

## **S.B. 195 Emergency Response Amendments**

(Sen. Vickers, Rep. Peterson) aims to bring greater balance to governor powers in emergency situations. It addresses limits in the length of time that health departments and the Executive Branch can impose emergency mandates.

## **H.B. 294 Pandemic Emergency Powers Amendments**

(Rep. Ray) allows for the termination of emergency powers and public health emergency powers related to COVID-19 upon reaching a certain threshold of vaccination and recovery.



## Agency Realignments

**H.B. 365 State Agency Realignment** (Rep. Ray) transitions the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services into the Department of Health and Human Services.

**S.B. 181 Department of Government Operations** (Sen. Millner, Rep. V Peterson) combines the Department of Administrative Services, The Department of Technology Services, and the Department of Human Resource Management into one, new department, the Department of Government Operations.

**H.B. 368 State Planning Agency Amendments** (Rep. Spendlove) changes the name of the Governor's Office of Management and Budget to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget and moves the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office to the Department of Natural Resources.

**H.B. 346 Natural Resources Entities Amendments** (Rep. Snider) moves the Office of Energy Development to the Department of Natural Resources and divides the Division of Parks and Recreation into two divisions.